



Writing a Media Advisory

National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month) events highlight stories of long-term recovery and the importance of sustaining hope of its possibility. A key to an even wider audience for this campaign is attracting media interest for your events. This will enable your organization to tell the story of **Recovery Month** and raise interest in issues surrounding substance use disorders, treatment, and recovery.

A media advisory is the primary tool for informing reporters about your upcoming events and why they should be there. It is a glimpse of what the event will entail and, hopefully, will compel the media to attend.

Media Advisory Facts: A media advisory is short, no longer than a page. It should focus on the “*who, what, when, where, and why*” and include the contact information of a point person for the organization for further inquiries.

Media Advisories: Only the Basics

When crafting a media advisory to promote your **Recovery Month** events, follow these suggestions:

- **List just the facts**—keep it to one page. This will be the most straightforward format for reporters to read and take away the most relevant information.
- **Summarize your event in one sentence.** It should be concise and include background on your event, why the issues covered are relevant to your community, and why the media should be interested.
- **List all the details of the event**—what it is, where it will be held, the date and time it will begin, and who is participating. Here, make note of local celebrities, policymakers, or high-profile sponsors who are speaking or appearing. The more name recognition you have, the more likely media will be interested.
- **Remember to include** a contact name, a telephone number, and an e-mail address that reporters can use to ask questions before or after the event.

Resources to Help You Write a Media Advisory

- **The media advisory template** at the end of this document can be adapted to fit the nuances of your event. Make sure you edit the placeholders in the brackets as necessary. Electronic versions of these materials and other templates are available on the **Recovery Month** Web site, www.recoverymonth.gov.
- **The 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings**, published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the premier source for the most recent data on trends of substance use, dependence, and treatment. This survey can be found online through SAMHSA’s Web site at www.oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh.htm.



- **Local information**, which you can obtain by contacting the Single-State Agency (SSA) in your state, will help you customize and localize your advisory even further. Refer to the SSA Directory in the “Resources” section of this planning toolkit. State and some local information also are available from SAMHSA. SAMHSA’s *National Survey on Drug Use and Health* provides national and statewide drug use statistics, the *National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services* profiles state treatment facilities, and the *Treatment Episode Data Set* is a resource for national and statewide demographics data, including commonly misused drugs. For more state and local information, visit <http://oas.samhsa.gov/geography.cfm>. Information on treatment facilities in your area can be found at www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov or by calling 1-800-662-HELP.

Three Tips for Distributing a Media Advisory

1. **Place your media advisory in “daybooks” and “week-ahead” columns in advance.** A “daybook” is a daily listing of all activities that media are invited to attend and is not available to the general public. On the other hand, “week-ahead” columns are listings published in local newspapers and business publications that have the ability to reach a wider audience.

Calling or e-mailing the reporters or editors of local newspapers and business publications that feature upcoming events in the community is a great way to request placement of your advisory in their week-ahead columns or calendar listings. This will bring your events to the attention of community members, in addition to the media, and will encourage them to attend.

2. **Create a media list** to organize information about reporters. A media list is a useful tool that will help you develop and keep an up-to-date, organized list of all the reporters whom you wish to contact. The list should include the name of the outlet, contact names, phone numbers, addresses, fax numbers, e-mail addresses, and “beats” or topics they typically write about.

A media list also will be useful when distributing a press release, which will contain more information about your *Recovery Month* events and key facts about new trends in substance use and treatment. For more information on press releases, see the “Writing an Effective Press Release” document included in this planning toolkit.

Keep in mind specialized media, such as African-American, Hispanic/Latino, and other minority newspapers or radio stations for your media list. Other outlets to consider including are:

- University/college newspapers
- Television, cable, and radio stations
- Small community papers or neighborhood newsletters
- Publications or newsletters produced by local organizations, such as businesses, hospitals, women’s centers, health care clinics, professional associations, mental health organizations, church and other faith-based institutions, grocery and drug stores, and local civic clubs

Daybook and Week-ahead Facts: To find daybooks and week-ahead columns, use search engines online to look up newswire services, such as Reuters and Associated Press. Call their closest bureau and ask for information on how to submit an item, including how far in advance they need your advisory. Some national media services, such as PR Newswire, charge for their services, so inquire before posting.

Media List Fact: Gather information on all types of media outlets (print, television, radio and online) using the media directories at your local library or bookstore (Bacon’s directories, the *Yellow Book*, and Gebbie’s *All-In-One Directory* are examples). Use this information to compile a list to keep all your notes in one place.

Once you have compiled your list of media outlets and reporters, call the outlet's switchboard or receptionist to confirm the reporters' contact information and determine if any other editors or reporters, such as health care reporters, would be interested in attending your **Recovery Month** event. Other important information to ask is each reporter's preferences about what time of day and how far in advance of the event he or she wants to be called, as well as the method of contact preferred; today, most reporters prefer e-mail. Use the contact information to submit your media advisory, asking to place your information on the newswire or local paper's daybook the week before, the day before, and the day of the event.

3. **Make follow-up calls to reporters** after you e-mail or fax your media advisory. Ask if they received your e-mail or fax, if they are interested in attending and/or covering your event, and if they have any initial questions about the event or addiction in general. Being persistent can make a difference in generating media interest.

Reporter Fact: Most reporters are very busy. Remember to respect the reporter's time by being concise. Practice what you will say before you call and prepare in case the reporter answers your call or it goes to voicemail. It will help you feel more comfortable.

Share Your Activities and Successes

Share your **Recovery Month** plans and activities with SAMHSA and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), along with the general public. Post them on www.recoverymonth.gov to generate momentum for the campaign, which will touch millions of people who are affected by substance use disorders.

Share community success stories and other outreach efforts during **Recovery Month** by completing the "Customer Satisfaction Form" in this planning toolkit. Instructions are included on the form.

Share samples of your organization's **Recovery Month** promotional materials with:

Office of the Director, Consumer Affairs
SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
1 Choke Cherry Road, Second Floor
Rockville, MD 20857

About **Recovery Month** and Substance Use Disorders

- **Sample materials** from this kit are available electronically at the **Recovery Month** Web site at www.recoverymonth.gov.
- **For additional **Recovery Month** information**, visit the Web site or call 1-800-662-HELP.
- **Substance use disorder, treatment, and recovery information** is available at SAMHSA's Web site at www.samhsa.gov.
- **Information on treatment options in your area** and the special services available can be found at www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov, a searchable database of more than 11,000 U.S. treatment facilities.



[Please adapt as needed for your event.]

[Date]

Media Advisory

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] TO HOLD 10TH ANNUAL 5K RUN/WALK TO CELEBRATE RECOVERY FROM SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

An estimated [(*local number*) people in (*state or community*) / 22.6 million people in the United States] suffer from substance use disorders and every year [(*local number*) people in (*state or community*) / 4 million people nationally] are able to get help and receive the treatment they need. To celebrate individuals in long-term recovery and their families, and the treatment providers that serve our community, [organization name] is hosting the 10th Annual 5K Run/Walk for Recovery.

Kicking off the run/walk will be [prominent speaker, such as a mayor]. Also participating in the event are [names of other high-profile attendees]. The event will culminate in a rally, including a “Chain of Recovery” featuring participants who have been affected by a substance use disorder in their lives connected to each other to visually show how widespread addiction is.

The run/walk is part of the 19th annual observance of *National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)* and will address this year’s theme, “*Join the Voices for Recovery: Real People, Real Recovery.*” *Recovery Month* is a nationwide celebration of people in long-term recovery from substance use disorders who have a renewed outlook on life and the treatment providers who help them reclaim their lives.

WHO: [participants]

WHEN: [date and time]

WHERE: [address of location]

CONTACT: [name and phone number of primary contact for event]

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